Cover Letter Writing Techniques

Writing Cover Letters
Your cover letters should follow the basic format of a typical business letter and should address three general issues including why you are writing, what you have to offer and how you will follow up. A targeted cover letter shows that you have the skills and qualifications for a specific position and why you should be selected for an interview. It seems like an almost impossible task for the employer to weed through the hundreds of resumes received to find the best candidates to interview. But writing an effective cover letter will get you noticed.

What does it take for your resume and cover letter to make an impact among these other resumes?
- Perfect means perfect - there should not be any typos or grammatical errors.
- That first glance at your cover letter is your one opportunity to make a good impression and make it to the next round.
- Invest time in writing your cover letter. A cover letter that gets results takes more than 10 minutes to write.

Here are some suggestions when writing a cover letter
When writing a cover letter, take the job posting and list the criteria the employer is looking for in a candidate. Then list the skills and experience you have. Address how your skills and qualifications match the job, focus on applying for jobs you do qualify for and spend some time gaining the additional skills or education.

Do’s and Don’ts

- **Always address your cover letter to a specific company or person.** If possible, find out the name of the person in the company who will be doing the hiring. Be sure to spell their name correctly. Also avoid creating a form letter; personalize the note for each position.

- **Include all your personal information:** name, phone numbers, address, email address. You want to be sure they can contact you easily for an interview.

- **Be formal.** Do not address the person by their first name. Paragraphs are single spaced with a full line in between each paragraph.

- **Don’t sell yourself short.** You only have a couple of paragraphs to convince the employer they should consider you for the position. Show that you know what you’re talking about.

- **Limit your cover letter to approximately three to four short paragraphs.** In the first paragraph make it clear what position you are applying for, how you came across this position, and why you want to be considered for this job. In the second paragraph, write about your experiences, accomplishments and skills that relate to the position. In paragraph three, request an interview and thank them for their consideration.

- **Keep it brief.** Only mention your most important achievements and skills related to the position.

- **Language.** Don’t use “I” to start every sentence. Do not use “very” or “good”. Avoid using slang. Do not use contractions (won’t, wouldn’t, that’s).

- **Mention your knowledge of the company or industry.** Make the employer think that it was not random choice of yours to apply for the position. Be careful not to go overboard. Be sure to research in order to be sure that your information is accurate.

- **Be sure to sign the letter.** This is an important personal touch. Ensure that your name is typed below the signature.

- **Proofread.** Use your computer spell-checker and read your letter over thoroughly. Consider having someone else proofread it for you as well. Remember that one error can give an employer a bad impression.
Your Address
City and Province
Postal Code

Date

Employer’s Name
Employer’s Title
Name of the Organization
City and Province
Postal Code

Re: Specific job title or posting number. (optional)

Dear Dr./Prof./Mr./Ms./Mrs. (name of employer):

**INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH:** State why you are writing, naming the specific position for which you are applying. If you are writing a solicited letter of application, explain how you learned about the opening.

**SECOND PARAGRAPH:** Tell the employer what you can offer him/her. Demonstrate that the skills, experience and education that you will meet his/her needs. Use active verbs to emphasize your capabilities (e.g., planned, organized, designed). Refer briefly to accomplishments that are relevant to the job for which you are applying. Identify at least one thing about you that is unique - that makes you the best candidate to fill the organization’s needs.

If you are answering an ad or a job request, be sure to address all of the requirements the employer stipulated. For example, if she/he requires a computer language or hospital experience, indicate that you have these requirements.

**THIRD PARAGRAPH:** Explain briefly, why you are interested in working for this employer. If possible, reveal some knowledge of the organization to which you are applying; explain why this organization and/or position interests you. Refer your reader to the attached resume; invite him/her to seek out more information about you there.

**CLOSING PARAGRAPH:** Open the door for an interview. Request an appointment to discuss the opening. Provide your telephone number. Use a confident tone!

Yours truly,

Your Signature

Your Name Typed
This handout will assist with writing your cover letter. How many ways can you say “I learned”? 

I learned….  
I acquired….  
I gained this insight…  
I developed the skill of…  
...was instrumental in my learning  

I became aware of …  
I was required to learn…  
I was trained to …  
I became acquainted with…  
I became skilled at…  

I achieved…  
I came across…  
I came into this experience with …  
I brought …to this experience  
I developed an understanding …  

I expanded my …  
I increased…  
I became knowledgeable in …  
I became educated in…  
I required a skill in …  

I recognized the importance of …  
I distinguished the difference between …  
I became aware of …  
I am now familiar with…  
As a result, I documented…  

I accepted …  
I acknowledge…  
I identified my …  
I am familiar with …  
I improved…  

I advanced …  
I gathered …  
I understand…  

I demonstrated. . .  
I confirmed . . .  
I established . . .  
I proved . . .  
I verified . . .  
I validated . . .